

The Writers Network News: March 2024

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The Writers Network News

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

Sponsor: Zebra Communications

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Notes

Some links in this newsletter are created through TinyUrl.com, which converts long links into shorter ones.

Our format doesn't support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines before and after words.

Writer's Quote of the Month

"The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say." -Anaïs Nin

Angela Anaïs Juana Antolina Rosa Edelmira Nin y Culmell was a French-born American diarist, essayist, novelist, and writer of short stories and erotica.

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Blogs

Dear Fellow Writers:

I sat on a speaker's panel around 1999 when someone asked the panel, "How can a poet promote himself?"

The poet on the panel answered, "One way is to start a blog."

Blog? I'd never heard the word, so I felt relieved when the poet who used the term explained, "The word comes from the term 'web log.' It's an online place where you can write things that speak to your audience. It can be a diary of your life or a place where you can give advice. You can post new poems or stories or whatever you want. It's an effective way to connect with your readers."

I filed the information in my brain but didn't know how to go about starting a blog. Within a year, though, I learned enough and found a place online to start my own blog. Soon I had several blogs that covered a variety of subjects.

Today my main blog is on my website, and there I add tips for writers and also write about personal things.

I have a reminder on my phone to add to my blog at least once a month, but to be honest, I often ignore the reminder. I don't add new entries just because it's time; I add entries when I have something to say, something worth posting.

My most recent entry has to do with hard-copy editing because lately two new clients requested it after almost a year of all my clients requesting electronic editing. I had almost deleted hard-copy editing from the offerings on my website, until these new requests came in.

I decided to explore the differences between electronic editing (editing the digital file) and hard-copy editing (editing printed manuscripts) and point out the advantages of each, so clients can decide which form is best for them. Here's a link to my newest blog entry: <http://tinyurl.com/59a95w93>

Let me know if it leaves you with any questions.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)  
Author of two award-winning editions of *Write In Style*, owner of Zebra Communications, editor of "The Writers Network News," and senior editor of *Enjoy Cherokee Magazine*

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### Members Write

Last month I wrote about achieving goals by setting deadlines. Marlene Clark responded with this harrowing yet fascinating story about deadlines:

"I was a freelancer for the *Hartford Courant*, but I had specific assignments—I wrote a couple columns, and I covered town news. Once I attended a three-hour Planning & Zoning Commission meeting where a contentious and complex issue would be discussed. The place was packed: engineers droned, lawyers persuaded, commissioners talked, and residents argued. When it was over, I had just under two hours to submit my story. (Early days of working remotely: I wrote from home and used a dial-up connection to send my stories.)

"We measured our stories in column inches. I wrote a thirteen-inch story in a little over an hour. I included quotes, relevant issues, some background, and the conclusion. Within five minutes of sending it, I got a call from my editor, who said, 'This is the worse piece of crap I've ever read. Rewrite it. You have seven inches.'

"I pounded my desk for about fifteen seconds, and then I panicked. How could I write this story in under a half hour? I took several deep breaths and repeated the basics: who, what, when, where, why. I reviewed my story and notes, and I wrote a six-and-a-half-inch story in under a half hour. My editor was right. The story was better. He was a great editor. And the story got a prominent spot in the Town News section."

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Mark Diamond sent a link to a thought-provoking book review from NPR titled "When art you love was made by 'Monsters': A critic lays out the 'Fan's Dilemma'" Read the article here: <http://tinyurl.com/56fdkpx3>

Thanks to all my subscribers for writing. Your responses inspire me to keep providing this free newsletter for writers.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Tight Writing and Voice

Q: There is someone in my current critique circle who keeps saying, "Write tight." Is he just being incredibly critical, or is he just trying to say something I should know?

A: "Write tight" is one of the basic tenets of creative writing. In truth it should be "Edit tight." We need to write first, in any way that comes to mind. After we complete the first draft, though, we need to go back through the manuscript and examine every word to see if it is vital to the sentence, paragraph, or plot. We can then delete almost every superfluous, redundant, or unnecessary word, sentence, paragraph, or chapter. As an example, I could edit your initial question to read like this: Someone in my critique circle keeps saying, "Write tight." Is he being critical, or is he saying something I should know? Recasting reduced thirty words to twenty-one without any loss in meaning.

Tight writing produces powerful prose. To write tight, seek and destroy weak wording in second and future drafts, and you will polish your prose.

Q: Please tell our writers' group what is meant by a writer's voice and if it is okay to change it from one book to another.

A: In creative writing voice refers to a mixture of things, such as word choice, punctuation, personality, perspective, point of view, opinions, preferences, interests, and subject matter. Voice can refer to a writing style, too, such short, tight sentences versus flowery, descriptive ones. Hemingway's voice was tight, journalistic, without flowery descriptions. Here's a quote from *The Old Man and the Sea*: "He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it." On the other hand, think of Dickens, who wrote more descriptive prose and who added humor and social commentary to his works. Here's a short quote from *A Tale of Two Cities*: "A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other." Yes, Dickens's voice definitely differed from Hemingway's.

A writer's voice can reflect the way the author thinks, speaks, and expresses opinions. Some writers' voices reflect simple thoughts. Some writers express only popular opinions through their voices, while others may address controversial subjects.

Because voice reflects the writer, though, I'm not sure a writer can easily change voices from one book to another unless the writer changes the point of view. For example, my memoir would have to be in my point of view—how I perceived things that happened to me and around me. It would definitely be written in my voice. If I wrote a novel from the point of view of one of the characters, however, I could conceivably change the voice. If my character was incarcerated, for example, I might use more slang, graphic terms, and cuss words.

Consider as an example *The Catcher in the Rye*, which J. D. Salinger wrote from the point of view of a teenaged boy.

Examine the following quote from Holden, the point-of-view character: "I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all." We clearly know Salinger himself didn't speak that way.

Writing in a voice other than the author's can be difficult, but it can be done. Easier, however, is to change writing styles from book to book. For example, one might write in a simpler style for a young adult novel, using small words and short sentences and paragraphs. The same writer might also write a literary novel with more complex sentences, less dialogue, more description, and longer sentences and paragraphs. In both books, though, the writer's voice would probably be similar, because the same person conceived the stories and decided how they would play out.

Yes, it's possible to write in varying voices, as long as the voice is consistent throughout the book in the case of omniscient point of view. If using the point of view of more than one character, it's necessary to keep each scene in a singular point of view, but the point of view—and therefore the voice—can change with each new scene or chapter.

Send your questions to Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications. [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [BZebra@aol.com](mailto:BZebra@aol.com). Read Bobbie's Zebra Communications blog at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>.

For much more information on hundreds of subjects of vital importance to writers, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book* at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. An excellent reference book for all writing groups.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* is available from Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ppcdkd> or buy it directly at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.  
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### Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Are you watching *Capote vs. The Swans* on Netflix? Vanity Fair explores the episode that shows Truman Capote in a friendship with James Baldwin.  
<http://tinyurl.com/y8cz4w9f>

### Be Sure to Use the Right Spelling

OK, O.K., or okay are all acceptable, but be consistent within the manuscript. Don't use OK in one place and then O.K. in another. By the way, ok and o.k. are not okay. My personal preference is okay, written out, because it blends in with the other words without drawing attention to itself.

(Excerpt from *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference*, available only at [ZebraEditor.com](http://ZebraEditor.com).)

### Yesterday a Wrestler; Today a Writer

In a social media post, indie wrestler Patrick Scott confirmed that he's been hired by WWE to work as a writers' assistant. His hiring was first reported by [Bodyslam.net](http://Bodyslam.net).

"Yesterday, I left NC as an independent wrestler. Today, I woke up in CT as an employee of @WWE," Scott wrote. "I have much more to say, but Twitter's character limit is telling me to take it home. To every single person who has supported me in my 10+ year career, THANK YOU"

### Terms Writers Should Know

#### Denouement (pronounced day-noo-MA)

The denouement comes after the climax of the story, when the protagonist overcomes obstacles and reverses the situation. It can also be called resolution.

#### Excerpt from *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*

Siddharth Chowdhury wrote an interesting article that starts, "One of the worst advices you could give to a young writer is to write every day. I have always believed one should wait for an image or memory to kickstart the process."

Read more at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/mr3a3hvf>

### Do You Know What You Don't Know?

Which word is correct? When is it one word or two words? When should it be hyphenated? You're not the only person confused, but a professional editor knows the answer.

Where do the commas go? What is the prudent and correct use of exclamation marks? You don't know what you don't know, and you may think you're right when you're wrong. Every book deserves a professional editor.

Zebra Communications offers three levels of service, two of which include developmental editing and an extensive report filled with advice, explanations, and suggestions on how to improve the manuscript's marketability. See our services, pricing, reviews, and more at [www.ZebraEditor.com](http://www.ZebraEditor.com). Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

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Words Matter Week

Words Matter Week is celebrated in the first full week in March. Have you ever said something to someone and immediately thought “I probably shouldn’t have said that” or felt you could have expressed it in a better or more soothing way? If yes, National Words Matter Week is for you just as it is for everyone else. It is a call to action to remind ourselves that our words and how we communicate with others truly matter. No matter the language you speak, feelings and expressions remain the same and so National Words Matter Week should be celebrated by everyone. Words Matter Week is spearheaded by the National Association Of Independent Writers & Editors (NAIWE) and has been celebrated as far back as 2008. Read more at <https://nationaltoday.com/words-matter-week/>

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Bobbie’s Blogs

Hard-copy Editing: Why Request It? Is it better than getting an electronic file edited?

Read my latest blog entry here: <http://tinyurl.com/59a95w93>

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It’s a little late to report this information, but it’s still in honor of all native languages: UNESCO has designated February 21 as International Mother Language Day, a day to honor linguistic diversity and the preservation of heritage language.

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Manuslips and Missed Opportunities for Improvement

You knew what you meant when you wrote it, but only a good editor can spot sentences that don’t say what an author intended.

Can you tell what can be improved with the following sentences? [See answers below.]

1. Kicking the bumper, the cars auto theft control started saying kindly move away from the vehicle, please move away.
2. Pressing the worn-out door buzzer, a voice came through the intercom
3. Walking out on the deck in my baggy, orange swimsuit, he directs me to a vacant lane.

Answers

1. As written the theft control kicked the bumper. Obviously the person who did the action is missing—hence a missing modifier. In addition “car” and “auto” can be considered the same thing, plus some punctuation is missing. Better: When she kicked the bumper, the car’s automatic theft control said, “Kindly move away from the vehicle. Please move away.”
2. As written a voice pressed the worn-out door buzzer. Better: After he pressed the worn-out buzzer, a voice came through the intercom.
3. As written the person who did the directing was wearing the baggy suit owned by the POV character. In addition because baggy and orange aren’t equal adjectives, no comma should come between them. Better: I walk out on the deck in my baggy orange swimsuit, and he directs me to a vacant lane.

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Manuslip: a slip in grammar, punctuation, or other error in a manuscript that often results in humor; a manuscript blooper

Etymology  
Coined by Bobbie Christmas (1944 -) in *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* (2004, 2015).

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Be My Friend on Facebook

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

Follow Zebra Communications on Facebook for news for writers, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff. <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

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CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

Q: Are reverse italics [i.e., roman text in an otherwise italic context] used when a legal case includes names of newspapers that would normally be italicized on their own?

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

*The Chicago Manual of Style* sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, and much more. If you write fiction or nonfiction books, you will want to know about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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Write Tight: Learn What To Look For, How to Look for It, and What to Delete

In five-time award-winning Write In Style you'll learn how to find and delete or rewrite words, sentences, and phrases that weaken your writing.

Write In Style uses humor and expertise to show writers how to tighten and strengthen their writing and create a fresh voice.

Write In Style is also available as an e-book or printed through the following source, although you may pay for shipping for the printed book: <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

Want to buy the book in Kobo through Rakuten? Easy. Go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/write-in-style-3>

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#### Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Jacqueline Lipton, Tobias Literary Agency  
Jacqui Lipton represents authors of fiction and nonfiction from middle grade through to adult, as well as selected projects for younger readers (picture books, chapter books etc.) She is currently focusing on developing her adult fiction and nonfiction lists and particularly enjoys mystery/crime, romance, how-to books, and compelling contemporary novels. She is not currently seeking high fantasy, and considers science-fiction selectively.

Do not query Jacqui via email, as unsolicited email queries will be deleted. Submit through the website at <https://thetobiasagency.com/jacqueline-lipton>

The Tobias Literary Agency is a full-service literary representation firm established in 2016. We specialize in shepherding writers and artists from dream to reality. Our literary agents are nimble and fierce with a collaborative spirit. We take a 360-degree view of our clients' intellectual property. Each project receives a targeted plan for execution of sub rights (film/TV, foreign translations, first serial, graphic novel adaptations, and more).

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The Atavist Magazine

Writers are welcome to send pitches to our editors at [seyward@atavist.com](mailto:seyward@atavist.com) and/or [jonah@atavist.com](mailto:jonah@atavist.com). We accept ideas on a rolling basis. Atavist stories can be historical or current; they can be about crime or science, adventure or romance; they can be rooted in investigative reporting or in first-person experiences. What unites them is their narrative approach—our stories are plot- and character-driven, cinematic, the kind of yarns you don't want to stop reading because you can't wait to see what happens next. That isn't to say that every story needs gasp-worthy moments. For instance, here's a beautiful Atavist feature about the monarch butterfly migration, in which the narrative is about whether or not a butterfly named Flamingo will survive his flight south.

We're looking for stories that need to be longer than a typical magazine feature, anywhere from 8,000 to 30,000 words. Payment rates vary by project. We offer a story fee plus, if applicable, a budget for expenses. Our baseline story fee is \$6,000.

Read full guidelines here: <https://magazine.atavist.com/submissions/>

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Send it in the body of an email to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com). Deadline: 18th of each month.

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